

ST. PATRICK COMPARED TO A COMET.

PANEGYRIC

ON

ST. PATRICK.

BY

FATHER SEBASTIAN

Of the Blessed Sacrament,

*Priest of the Congregation of the Cross and Passion of Our Lord
Jesus Christ.*

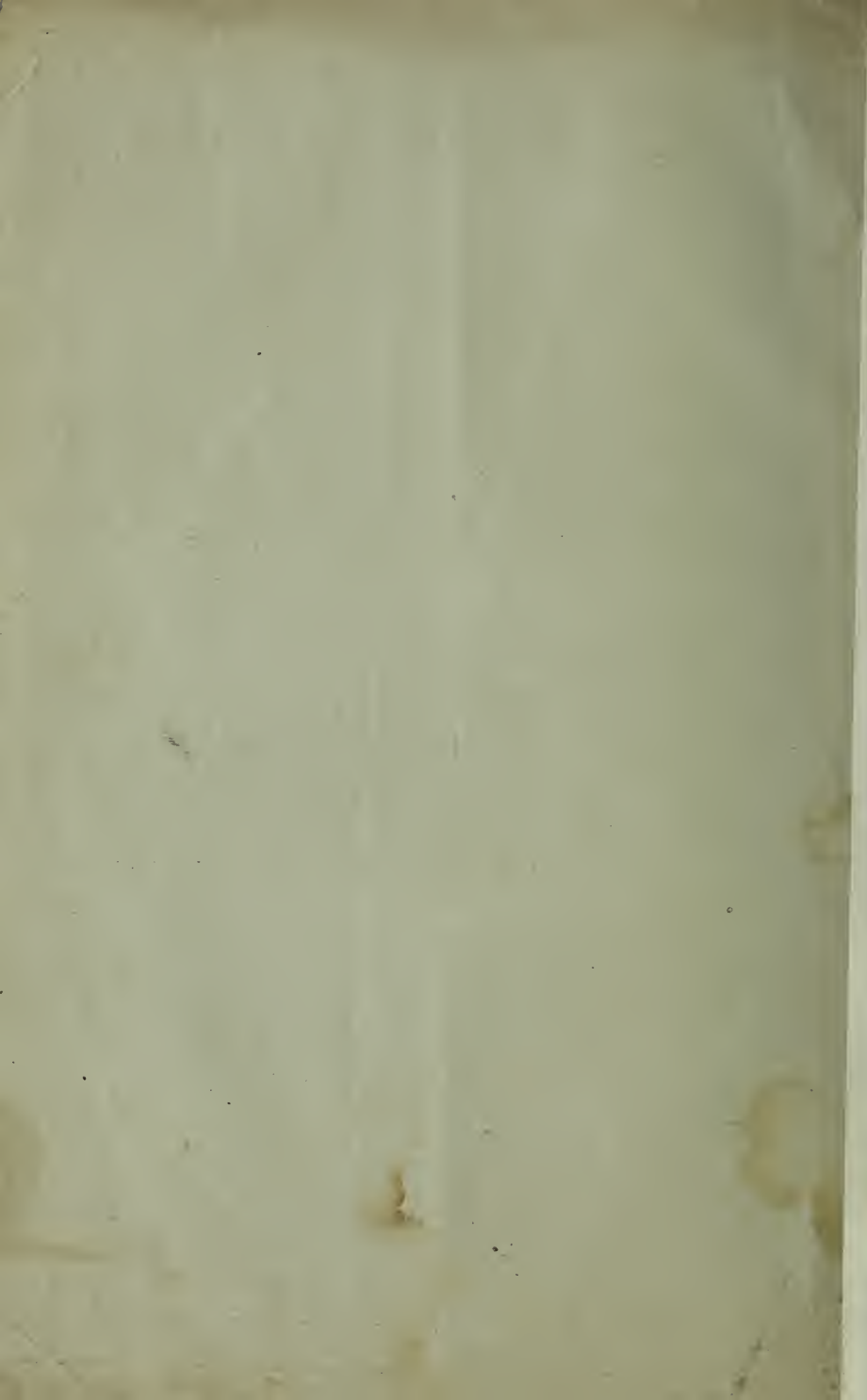
PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.

Dublin:

JAMES DUFFY AND SONS,

15 WELLINGTON QUAY,

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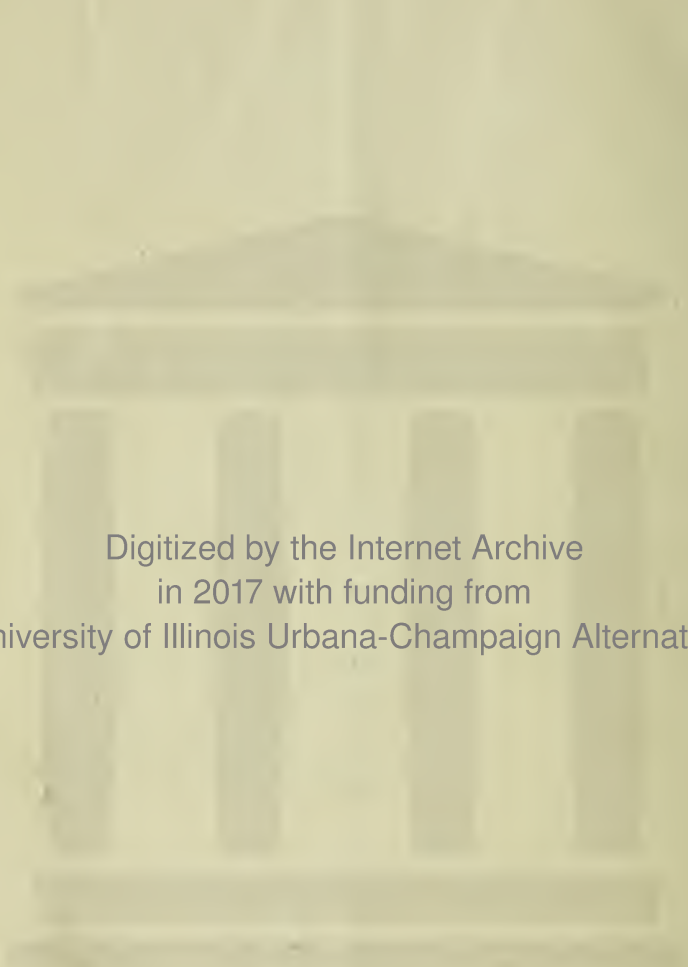
IN compliment to the Brothers and Sisters of our Confraternity established here, of the Most Holy Congregation of the Cross and Passion, whom I have always much esteemed, *cum permissu superiorum*, "I have gladly consented to the reprinting and publication of this Panegyric on the Apostle of Ireland. It was preached in St. Mary's Catholic Church, Melior Street, London, 1864, and appeared soon after in the *Catholic Universe*.

"SEBASTIAN

"*Of the Blessed Sacrament.*"

St. Paul's Retreat,
Mount Argus, Dublin.

May, 1886.



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I. X. P.

THE APOSTLE OF IRELAND.

“For star differeth from star in glory.”—1 CORINTHIANS xv. 41.

WHILST meditating on the text of St. Paul, the Doctor of the Gentiles, “For star differeth from star in glory,” I was struck with the happy imagery of that great Apostle in taking the stars as figures of God’s Saints, especially when I reflected how vastly different those celestial bodies are in colour, beauty, size and distance. But when I called to mind those other words of Holy Writ, “They that instruct others unto justice shall shine as stars in the Kingdom of Heaven,” I still more admired the justice and beauty of the comparison. One saint I compared to a fixed star, another in my fancy represented more appropriately a planet, and another I likened to the Polar Star: whereas others seemed to resemble fiery meteors which suddenly blazed forth in all grandeur, and as suddenly vanished from our sight. St. Paul I compared to Mars, because as Mars rules like a King in the sky, so with immense mightiness St. Paul preached among the nations; St. Peter to Jupiter, because as Jupiter was regarded as God of victory and valour, so the glorious St. Peter became of all the Apostles, after he had received the Holy Ghost, the most courageous and successful, and was, indeed, the first visible head of our Church. And so on I proceeded in my comparisons, and at last I said: To what star shall I liken the renowned patron of Ireland whose festivity we celebrate to-day, and in whose

honour we are now assembled in prayer ; and in my sacred reverie, Angels' voices answered " The Comet."

Yes, beloved people of Ireland, I resemble the great Patriarch of Erin to a large comet sweeping through the heavens, and, therefore, invite you as loving children of St. Patrick to listen with the greatest reverence, while with the blessing of the Lord, I proceed in delineating the image which I have selected to illustrate the virtues of the noble servant of God, whom we have chosen for the subject of to-day's Panegyric.

In the first place I compare St. Patrick to a comet ; because as a comet is an extraordinary star among the stars, so was St. Patrick extraordinary among the saints. In three ways was St. Patrick extraordinary among the saints : He was extraordinary in his penances, extraordinary in his zeal, and still more extraordinary in his works.

You have read St. Patrick's life, and surely, dear brethren, you must have been struck with amazement when you began to ask yourselves how he could possibly have lived under his constantly increasing austerities. When only sixteen years old, he was taken as a slave by some barbarians and carried into Ireland ; where he was obliged to look after cattle on the mountains and in forests, in hunger and nakedness, amidst snow, rain, and in other severities. In this suffering condition he always had recourse to God with his whole heart, in fervent prayer and fasting. Indeed even at this early period of life, it was his custom to adore Jesus a hundred times during the day and a hundred times at night, breaking off his sleep to return to his knees on the damp ground of his broken shed. But these afflictions were a source of heavenly benediction, because he bore them all with patience, resignation and love. When we have sorrows we lament until they go away ; but he rejoiced much in his, and even prayed for more.

The words of his *Confession* give simply and graphically a picture of the young captive's life : " After I had

come to Ireland, I was daily tending sheep, and many times in the day I prayed, and more and more the love of God, and His faith and fear, grew in me, and my spirit was stirred within me ; so that in a single day I have said as many as a hundred prayers, and in the night nearly the same, so that I remained in the woods and upon the mountains, and before the dawn I was called to pray by the snow, the ice, and the rain, and I did not suffer from them, nor was there any sloth in me, as I see now, because then the spirit was burning within me."

After six years or more spent in slavery, under Milcho, St. Patrick was admonished by an angel to return to his father's house. He repaired immediately to the sea coast and found there a vessel just ready to set sail ; but the captain would not take him because he had no money. He was returning to his hut, praying as he went, when lo ! the sailors called him back and took him on board. After three days' voyage, they landed in the north of Scotland ; but for almost a month they could find no food. St. Patrick had often spoken to the crew on the merciful power of God : on this occasion, therefore, they besought him to seek from the Almighty speedy relief ; whereupon he invited them to join him in holy prayer. They did so, and on the same day met happily a herd of wild swine. But during their distress, our young saint refused to touch meats which had been offered to idols. After the lapse of a few years, he was again led captive, but recovered his liberty after about two years' rigid slavery. It was at this period of his wonderful career, beloved brethren, that God, by repeated visions, manifested that he was destined to the great work of the conversion of Ireland ; for he thought he saw all the children of the country stretching out their little innocent hands, and piteously crying to him for help.

At the age of twenty-two St. Patrick recovered his liberty for the third time, and, being much moved in heart and mind by the vision of the little ones of Ireland, calling upon him to come to save the country he

dedicated himself with extraordinary zeal to the conversion of the Irish race. At the risk of his life he then sought for necessary education in the school of his uncle, St. Martin of Tours.

St. Martin, who had been consecrated Bishop of Tours the very year before St. Patrick's birth, gladly welcomed his kinsman to his poor home at Marmoutier, by the Loire. There, in a rock-bound spot, hard by that rapid river, the holy Bishop had planted his monastery. There were no high-soaring towers or pointed gables in those days, but only humble huts and caves like those of the monks of the East. Greatly must the newly-freed captive from Erin have loved the quiet of that peaceful austerity, and deep indeed must he have drunk of that monastic spirit which was afterwards to be poured forth in abundance upon the island in the west. Here, it is said, the Saint vowed a life-long abstinence from flesh-meat ; and if his pious Irish children are even to this day singular in their devotion to penance, they can defend their conduct against modern effeminacy by a reference to their Apostle's fastings and abstinence during his hundred and twenty years. But Marmoutier soon lost its saintly founder. His aged uncle died, immortalized by a life of sanctity and miracles, and leaving a disciple who carried to the Irish people devotion to St. Martin, and a love for St. Martin's day.

In the hermitage of Marmoutier it was that St. Patrick saw in vision the angel Victor, his companion on the heights of Slemish, who came to him with God's message and mission. "And I read the commencement of the epistle containing 'the voice of the Irish.' And as I read the beginning of the letter, I thought I heard in my mind the voice of those who were near the wood of Foclut, which is near the western sea. And they cried out : ' We entreat thee, holy youth, to come and walk still amongst us.' And my heart was greatly touched, so that I could not read any more." Thus doubly called, by God and man, our wonderful Saint set himself to his long thirty years' preparation for the laborious apostolate of Ireland.

St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, became St. Patrick's guide, teacher, and friend after the death of his holy uncle, St. Martin. It was he who, perhaps, of all men, had the greatest share in forming of the religious character of our hero. There is, in the accounts that reach us of the saintly Bishop of Auxerre, a truly manly courage, and a sweet but firm ruling power, which seem to have been richly inherited by his disciple. The records of Patrick's life as student, monk, and priest, and bishop, are sufficient. Probus tells us that he spent many years with St. Germanus "in patience, obedience, charity, and chastity, in sanctity of heart and soul." From Auxerre he journeyed to the famous Monastery of Lerins, near the present town of Cannes. Some thirty years before, that island had no trace of man upon it save the ruins of a Druids' temple, round whose mouldering walls poisonous vipers swarmed in multitudes so as to render all human habitation next to impossible. One day a humble anchoret, Honoratus by name, landed on its shore. At his prayer, and before his cross, the poisonous reptiles fled. Pious men soon crossed over to join the lonely islander: gradually the fame of Lerins spread: and at the date when St. Patrick sought its shore, the island of serpents had come to be called the nursery of saints and scholars. Strange dwelling for him who on that balmy southern isle was to nourish in his heart the sanctity and learning that was to purge the reptiles from distant Erin, and to make her another yet grander island of saints and scholars. It is very touching to read, in the early records of those days, the expressions of fond attachment towards that "happy island" of Lerins. Hearts detached from all else on earth clung lovingly to the memories of what seemed to them an earthly Paradise. And there are few spots on earth more hallowed to a lover of St. Patrick, since perhaps there was no other, save dear Erin, sweeter to his heart.

We learn that our Saint went to Rome from Lerins, and that he pursued for some time his studies in the great

College of the Lateran. And so the years rapidly passed on. St. Patrick, still young in heart, was anxiously preparing for his life-work, though over his fiftieth year. St. Germanus, his aged friend and guide, sent by the Pope to Britania to attack in its stronghold there the heresy of Pelagius, called St. Patrick, to assist him. It is a very interesting fact, that the island which was to receive so much of its earliest and of its latest Catholicity from Ireland, should have been the field of the first missionary labours of the Irish Apostle. Perhaps there is a blessing too in the thought of St. Patrick's feet having hallowed a land from which so many sorrows afterwards came to his children. He has shown in his life how sanctity may ripen in years of servitude, and how a saint may repay a hard master by bringing, in return for slavery and oppression, the light of truth and freedom.

From his labours with St. Germanus in Britania, St. Patrick was sent to Rome. Palladius, Archdeacon of Rome, had been commissioned by Pope Celestine to preach the Gospel of Christ to the Irish. Where could he find a more experienced helper than St. Patrick? So thought St. Germanus; and accordingly St. Germanus sent our Saint, with a priest, Segetius, to the Pope, recommending him as "a strong husbandman, well fitted for cultivating the harvest of the Lord." "O Lord Jesus," prayed the holy missionary, "conduct me, I beseech Thee, safely to the seat of the Holy Roman Church, that, receiving authority from thy vicar to preach with confidence Thy sacred truths, the Irish nation may, through my ministry, be gathered to the fold of Christ." And now the hopes of long years are being realized, and the call of the Irish children is being at last answered. St. Patrick receives from the Pope, the fountain-head of all authority in the Church, the necessary commission to preach the Word of God to the Irish people. Now hastening towards what was his "Isle of Destiny," his Innisfail, he learns of the death of Palladius. He is, therefore, compelled to go back, in consequence, to receive the episcopal

consecration, which he now requires as the Apostle of Ireland. At Eboria, in Northern Italy, by the command, and it would seem in presence, of the Pope, at the hands of St. Maximus, Bishop of Turin, St. Patrick was consecrated. The Christian Emperor Theodosius assisted, as well as Pope Celestine, at a ceremony which, could the secrets of the future have been revealed, would have filled both Church and Empire that day with gladness. St. Patrick then set sail, trusting in the Providence of God, for the much loved Irish coasts, where he arrived, in perfect safety.

From this simple but eventful narration of St. Patrick's early days we learn, my brethren, how very penitential was his disposition towards himself; but the extraordinariness of his penance will more clearly appear when I recount to you some of the austerities which he performed after he was ordained priest by Pope Celestine and was engaged in his apostolic labours among Erin's aborigines. He was accustomed daily to recite the entire Psalter together with all the Canticles and hymns and two hundred other prayers; three hundred times in the day he adored God on bended knees, and at each canonical hour he fortified himself with the holy sign of the cross. Distributing the night into three parts, he spent one in saying a hundred psalms and genuflecting two hundred times, the other in reciting the remaining fifty psalms with his heart, eyes and hands, elevated towards heaven; but the third part stretched upon the bare stones, he gave reluctantly to necessary sleep.

During his heavy missions and travels, like our dear Lord, he never wore anything upon his feet, and following the example of the first Apostles, he never gave up labouring with his hands for his scanty meal; and we read in his life, that his naked feet were frequently covered with bruises, thorns, and blood, from long walks through forests and marshes, over rocks and mountains, to reach the different clans he was anxious to convert.

But Croagh Patrick, like Lough Derg, even to this day,

bears witness to St. Patrick's extraordinary penance. St. Patrick is about to equal the fasts of Moses and Elias. It is Shrovetide when he goes up to his lonely mountain of prayer ; but it will be Eastertide ere he comes down. He goes up there, that in that lofty solitude, with the desert of ocean on one side and the scarcely less deserted land-tract on the other, he may fast and pray for the salvation of Erin. It is the climax of his life-struggle ; his crowning victory over the demons that were combatting with him for the people he loved most. His arms for the fight are prayer and penance, the "strong cry and tears" with which his Master, in His dark hour of dereliction, gained man's redemption. To understand well that awful conflict we must remember how great was the prize, and how extraordinary were the saint's demands. The island where devils seemed to have their full fling, like the envenomed reptiles which in strange multitudes found there a northern home, was to become the island of sanctity and learning. The people that sat in darkness were to shine forth brightest of all, and to carry the light, not only to the eastward continent, but in long centuries to come, to the unknown lands that lay beyond the Western ocean. It was to be a victory won for millions of souls ; and need we wonder that the battle raged fierce and long ? God's angel made St. Patrick an offer of souls as innumerable as the waves on the ocean ; yet he would have more. The angel bade him stop praying—enough had been promised !! No, though the promises of salvation for his own, upon the judgment day, were even sevenfold for every hair upon his head, that mount of apparition he would not leave, nor cease from fast or prayer, until God should promise to give into his hands the salvation of the sons of Erin. The angel brought at eventide the answer to him that this was granted. His strong prayer was heard.

The struggle over, St. Patrick, at the angel's bidding, now knelt and blessed the land for which he had thus prayed.

Every poisonous reptile then fled before his powerful blessing, and the devils back to hell. This was truly the victory of confident, persevering prayer ; and that great lesson, far more than the miracles that accompanied it, has throughout all ages since fixed the eyes of Christians on Croagh Patrick, and on him who there bravely strove against Hell with no other sword and no other breast-plate but faith and the example of Christ crucified.

These, beloved brethren, are only a few of the many austerities which St. Patrick performed for the love of God. I have not told you of his hair shirts and other chastisements and bodily flagellations ; since I deem the examples given quite sufficient to prove that he was truly a champion of grace and very extraordinary among the saints for his spirit of penance and self-mortification.

St. Patrick was also a hero in his zeal and still more extraordinary in his works. See how he travelled the country from county to county, converting the people of every town, city, and village. Carried on the swift wings of sweet zeal for souls, nothing daunted him, nothing thwarted him, nothing stopped him ; kings, queens, princes, rulers as well as subjects—all knelt at his hal-lowed feet and received upon themselves the placid waters of salvation from his blessed hands. In his zeal he grew as a giant ; he built convents, ordained priests, erected churches, fixed episcopal sees, and duly consecrated bishops and archbishops, established an ecclesiastical hierarchy, chose Armagh as the metropolitan see ; and covering the whole nation with crosses, schools, and other pious institutions ; in less than forty years, he, all alone converted and sanctified the entire people. St. Bernard writing of the wonderful zeal and great achievements of the Apostle of Ireland, says of him that “he not only converted the whole country, by his preaching and prodigious miracles, but that he also cultivated his vineyard with so fruitful a benediction and sacred increase from heaven, as to render Ireland a most flourishing garden in

the Church of Christ, and completely a country of saints." Now, my brethren, this is very much, indeed, from such a holy doctor, and ought greatly to influence the mind of every unprejudiced thinker. Let it, therefore, sink deeply into your minds and hearts.

When the whole nation had become Catholic, about forty years after his consecration as bishop, he wrote his own confessions, as a lasting testimony of his noble mission. His "Confessions" are solid and replete with humility, good sense and piety : and he tells us in them of his many obstacles, adversities, narrow escapes, and all his other difficulties. In one part of this golden treasure he says, "That a short time before he commenced writing the book, he himself and all his companions had been plundered and laid in irons, for having baptized the son of a king against the father's will." They were released, however, fourteen days after. He says that he lived in daily expectation of such accidents and of holy martyrdom ; but, that he feared nothing, having his hope, as a firm anchor, fixed in heaven and reposing with an entire confidence in the goodness of the Almighty. He says, moreover, that he had lately baptized a very beautiful young lady of quality, who some days after, came to tell him that she had been admonished by angels to consecrate her love and purity to Jesus Christ. He gave God thanks for her vocation to religion; and she pronounced her vows before him, with wonderful fervour and joy.

Now, dearly beloved brethren, which of the Apostles or which of God's saints, ever alone converted an entire nation, besides the glorious Patron of to-day ? He, and he alone, not only converted from Paganism to Catholicism the whole of this beautiful green island by his miracles and his preachings ; but, he and he alone, perfected the country in the faith, completely sanctifying it, by his prayers, vigils, fastings, indefatigable labours, and ever active burning zeal. Therefore, it is as clear as the noon-day sun that St. Patrick is not only extraordinary amongst the saints for severity of personal penance ; but

that he is likewise marvellous among them on account of his unbounded zeal and most wonderful works ; and, this is the reason why I compared him to a comet ; because as a comet is an extraordinary star, following an extraordinary orbit, and but very rarely appearing in the sky ; so St. Patrick is extraordinary among the saints, verging off into an extraordinary apostleship of his own, and neither preceded by nor followed by anyone of God's servants who perfectly resembles him, or has achieved such stupendous wonders or gained such mighty victories.

St. Patrick founded the church of Armagh some time before he died. The site was, as we read in the ancient *Book of Armagh*, miraculously pointed out by God. Overcome by the patience of the Saint, Daire, the chief of that territory, gave at last all the land demanded. By a special providence of God, the site then chosen is the very land on which now stands the new Cathedral. The gifts of God are without stint. St. Patrick would certainly have chosen to be laid to rest there, where he had fixed his see, since he loved the spot so fondly. There he had with a century of years upon him, settled down to prepare for his last great journey to a blissful eternity. There the lepers came to him, as to Christ his master, sure of being cleansed. And there it seemed to him that he would like to make what, in his faith, he called "the place of his resurrection." But now as in his earliest days, he would go where God should send him. It was God's will that not in Armagh, but in Saul, by the shore of Strangford Lough where he had landed sixty years before, our Apostle should die. His successor already occupied the primatial see. The *Confession* of that wonderful life—wonderful in its simplicity as in its heavenly power—had been committed to the very best hands. Visions of the future, clear to the venerable Patriarch, foretold at once his approaching death. Bridget, the "Pearl of Erin," should go for St. Patrick's shroud now, since his days were quickly shortening. Full of years, like the prophets of old, with the prayers and blessings of a people whom he had so often blessed ; in a land

which he had found in darkness, and which he left to be the brightest jewel of the Church, St. Patrick calmly laid himself down to die.

After sixty years of his wonderful apostleship in Ireland, his happy hour of reward arrived, and being worn out with cares for the church newly established, and having become greatly renowned in word and work, he sweetly slept in the Lord, on the 17th March, 493, at the wonderful age of Moses—a hundred and twenty, after having been nourished by the sacred mysteries of the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. He was buried most solemnly in Saul, County Down, in Ulster, in the fifth century, and a beautiful church was erected over his sacred remains, and his name is not only still loved, honoured, and remembered, but is to be found written, indelibly, in the heart of every Irishman.

St. Evin describes what manner of man this was whose body lies in Saul, but whose soul lives with God. “A just man indeed was this ; with purity of nature like the patriarch’s ; a true pilgrim, like Abraham ; gentle and forgiving like Moses ; a praiseworthy psalmist, like David ; an emulator of wisdom, like Solomon ; a chosen vessel for proclaiming truth like the Apostle Paul ; a man full of grace and the knowledge of the Holy Ghost, like the beloved John ; a fair flower-garden to children of grace ; a fruitful vine-branch ; a flashing fire, with force and warmth of heat to the sons of life, for instituting and illustrating charity ; a lion in strength and power, a dove in gentleness and humility ; a serpent in wisdom and cunning to do good ; gentle, humble, merciful to the sons of life—dark, ungentle towards the sons of death ; a servant of labour and service of Christ ; a king in dignity and power for binding and loosening, for liberating and convicting, for killing and giving life . . . Though great his honour here, greater honour will be his in the day when judgment will be given on the fruits of his work.”

But, beloved brethren, I compare your generous Patron

to a brilliant comet for this other reason also ; because as a comet is followed by a long trail of silvery light, so is St. Patrick followed by a long train of saints, perpetual faith, and daily wonders, always obedient to the Creator's command, which was given by His crucified Son : " So let your light shine before men ; that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Heavenly Father." St. Bernard will explain what I mean in these few words. " Those nations which had for many ages, esteemed all others barbarians did not blush to receive from Ireland, the utmost extremity of the uncivilized world, their most renowned teachers and guides in the greatest of all the sciences, the science of the saints." From the happy time of Ireland's conversion, never did the people lose the faith—never did wonders cease—never was there a lack of great soldiers, scholars, and saints : and if you would know their number and names, let me tell you, that it would be as easy for you to count the stars in the firmament above you, as to mention them all. However you will find the names of a great many of them in Father O'Hanlon's lives of Irish saints.

Now, my brethren, that faith which St. Patrick explained on the humble little shamrock, that faith still lives together with the shamrock itself in every Irish mind, heart, and vein, in spite of worse than Neronean persecutions. From the epoch in the year of our Lord 1135, when King Henry II. invaded the country, down to the present day of sorrow, Ireland has been trampled upon in every possible manner on political grounds. But since the unhappy reformation it has been still more cruelly persecuted on account of holy religion, and yet Erin remains faithful to God and St. Patrick ; and has nevertheless always been merciful to her persecutors. Many parts of France turned Huguenot and opened revolt throughout the whole country. The Greeks became schismatics—the Swiss acknowledged Calvin,—of the Germans and Prussians, some became Lutherans, some Calvinists, and others Independents. And the Russians

gave up all Papal authority to the Czar. The African Moors conquered and overran Spain and Portugal ; and Constantinople kissed the alcoran of Turkey. Palestine passed over to Sultans and infidels, and even forbade the sacred reminiscences of our dear Saviour's Life and Passion to be shown to Christians. And England, for the third time, lost the faith under the dark reign of illegitimate Elizabeth, and established Protestantism for the people, by an Act of Parliament. Thus you see every country in the world, at certain periods and for certain lengths of time—even Norway, Denmark, and Sweden—passed through change of religion as well as various systems of government. But dear afflicted broken-hearted Ireland is the only nation in the world which never lost the faith. No wonder, then, that reptiles will not live on such a consecrated soil. No wonder that the pretty little shamrock plant will not grow in any other garden, and that her fields continue verdant and fertile.

Ah! my brethren, it is only now that the Irish Catholic begins to breathe with freedom. Before the days of the Emancipation which Daniel O'Connell bravely won for his country, the penal laws enacted under Elizabeth, James, Charles, and Cromwell, were in full vigour, and your priests were banished far away. Why, even now, there are old people among you in whose early infancy it was death to be found present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. And yet, though your language was proscribed, your schools closed, your colleges blown down, your universities sold, your monasteries like the Four Courts, converted into places of public trial, your Churches, like Christ Church and St. Patrick's, put into Protestant hands, your altars upset, and the furniture thereof publicly auctioned, your poor children taken from you, or bought for soup or blankets, your priests murdered or exiled for ever, your trade destroyed, your commerce stopped, and your property wrenched from you and given to unfair landlords ; you still hold and enjoy the Catholic

Faith, and are as strong as ever in your fidelity to Rome.

England strove very perseveringly to uproot the Irish race altogether and to establish another people instead, but God always frustrated those nefarious attempts ; for many who came over to colonize the country became as much Catholic, and almost as much Irish, as the natives themselves. Hence the adage, "*Hiberniores ipsis Hibernicis.*" And as to those who emigrated to different parts of the newly discovered worlds, they carried the faith with them, converting the people wherever they sojourned. I verily believe, indeed, that were it not for the Irish people and the Irish faith, a great portion of the Christian world would have fallen back again into paganism : however, this much I am certain of, that whatever true religion is at present to be found in the United Kingdom, owes its life to a great extent to the Irish Church.

But now, dear brethren, have we not great reason to rejoice when we consider how, in spite of so much suffering, misrule, so many penal laws, and the anomaly of an alien state Church, the hierarchy of Ireland still lives on, and that it will never, never die. And does it not prove to the wondering world how great must have been the saint who brought such blessings upon the nation. Surely Ireland's great prelates, scholars, consecrated monks and virgins, and Ireland's strong faith and noble martyrs are St. Patrick's trophies, following after him as a sacred flame in a most wondrous trail of glory. Therefore have we justly compared him to a comet, not only because of the miracles and fame of his life, but also because as a comet bears after it a long trail of silvery light, so our hero carried after him armies of good works and saints, into the unlimited spaces of God's heavenly felicity.

Let us here conclude, but ere we do so, permit me to exhort you to study to become true children of your noble Patron by a strict imitation of his virtues. Above all things learn his ever enduring patience and forgiveness of injuries ; and, when you call to mind your past losses

and wrongs, or present sufferings, think of his wonderful resignation through all his hardships and trials, remembering his only helmet was prayer, faith his only shield, the Crucifix his only weapon ; and yet with these three humble instruments he conquered the entire nation. Wherefore, if like Naples and Poland, you have no other crown but thorns, poverty and shame, do not lose your merit by revenge or by joining secret societies condemned by Holy Church, for surely St. Patrick never wore a golden earthly crown, but eat his mildewed bread in tears, and waited with loving penitence for the eternal crown of glory. God rewarded his virtue even in this life, by adorning his sacred head with an archbishop's mitre, and made him the Primate of all Ireland. So it will be with you, dear children of broken-hearted Erin, if you strive by prayer to carry the cross and wear your thorny crown with patience, the time will *surely* come when God will see justice done *even* in this world ; and, then you will have the happiness of saving your souls as well as of obtaining your country's rights.

You have heard of St. Catherine of Sienna—Our Blessed Lord once appeared to her with two crowns in his hands ; one of gold, the other was of thorns : and he said, “ My child, which shall I give you of these.” She thus wisely and sweetly replied, “ The thorns, the thorns, Dear Lord, for how could I venture to wear a golden crown when thou didst suffer thy most hallowed temples to be penetrated with the sharpest kind of thorns.” Christ then gave her according to her choice, and promised on his sacred word to adorn her fair head with crowns of heavenly gold and diamonds after her death. So it will be with you, noble sons of broken-hearted Erin, if you carry your cross and wear your thorns with patience, purity and love ; and when you leave this melancholy exile St. Patrick and your own dear guardian angels will bear you up to glory.

You still possess the faith of dear St. Patrick. Oh ! may your holy faith support you throughout all your

mortifications, sorrows and wrongs ; and, may it enable you generously to pray for your persecutors, that they may be brought back to the true fold unto justice and repentance. Remember the Saviour's prayer for his crucifiers, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." Thus should you pray for them ; and, when you hear of cruel ejectments, unjust promotions, and unfair treatment in the land, call to mind these other words of Jesus to his followers : "If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." These are the grand and beautiful lessons which St. Patrick taught and practised ; and, these are the sacred admonitions I feel myself as a Priest and Passionist, bound conscientiously in paternal affection to administer to my audience, as the conclusion of this panegyric in honour of St. Patrick.

I have now done ; do you perform your part, by keeping lovingly entwined in your hearts faith and the shamrock of Ireland on which your Apostle explained the Trinity, permitting nothing on earth to separate you from St. Patrick's train of virtues, saints, and glory. Proselytism will tempt you in your poverty, and offer soup, coal, blankets, education, situations, and money, but don't sell away your conscience or your children redeemed in the blood of Jesus. Better that your little ones die before your eyes than lose their precious souls : "For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his immortal soul."

Let us now, my dearly beloved brethren, fervently ask St. Patrick's blessing and prayer for this our much loved country ; for never did poor Ireland stand more in need of prayer than at the present time, when she is actually bleeding. The people are dying day after day, through sheer want of food and raiments ; her young men and maidens are hastening away in crowds from starving homes into distant exile ; her men of trade through want of funds are afraid to speculate, and her plans of political progress are as speedily crushed as they are proposed. O great God

of Heaven ! as affairs are so gloomy now, what will become of the country when the Transatlantic war is over and the remaining few of the Irish peasantry are gladly emigrating to fill up the vacant situations of the armies of the fallen brave. At present we have little more than four million inhabitants of the land when we should number twelve million, and ere ten years elapse we shall sink down to the insignificant census of not much more than three million native Irish in the country !!!

Nothing surely but the dire scourge of general famine stares us in the face ; and, when it comes it will come in all its dire grimness and most frightful severity, unless, indeed, averted by extraordinary aid. Ah ! then, dear brethren, have we not reason to pray with all our strength and heart ? Therefore, let us cast ourselves most humbly at the feet of our beloved Patron, and let us pray to him most earnestly for ourselves and for the salvation of Ireland.

Ever glorious St. Patrick ! behold us kneeling before thee in most humble attitude. We pray for ourselves and also for our dear country. Obtain for us grace to pardon our enemies. Bless us in our undertakings, protect Erin's Catholic children, and enable us to save our immortal souls according to our consciences ; and then deliver us from all snares and temptations, praying for us now, but especially at the hour of death. We beseech thee most earnestly, O glorious Patriarch and Apostle, never forsake Ireland, the country of thy first and last love ; but watch over her still, and preserve her from all foes, both visible and invisible, until kingdoms shall have passed away, and all men shall have been rewarded accordingly as they have done.

On our part, dear St. Patrick, we shall be always faithful to thee and our holy religion, and like thee shall ever be mindful of those most memorable words of Jesus Christ recorded in chapter the sixth of St. Matthew's Gospel : " Be not solicitous, therefore, saying : what shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall

we be clothed ? For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and his justice ; and all these things shall be added unto you." 32, 33, & 34.

Let these be our constant resolutions and daily practice, and thus shall we, dear brethren, prove ourselves to the whole world the worthy children of St. Patrick, which is the blessing I sincerely wish every Irishman, with all the veins of my heart, as a priest and as a passionist.

FINIS.

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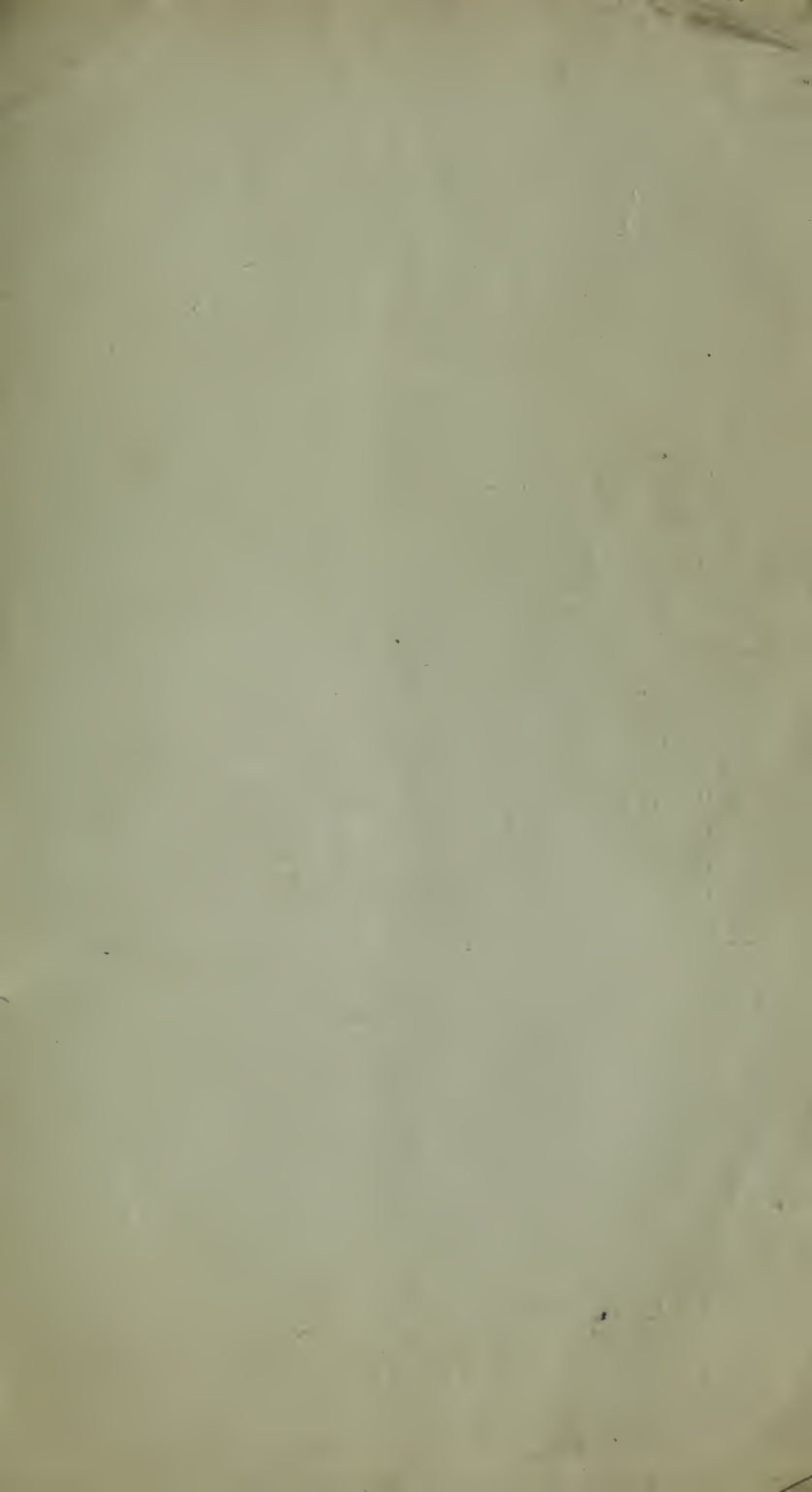
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